THE NATURE OF LATROBE

A guide to the parks and reserves in the Latrobe Region

Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club

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in the Latrobe Region

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Front Cover: Large Duck-orchid, *Caleana major* *Ralph Laby*
Back Cover: Early morning sunrise through Mountain Ash in Tarra Bulga NP *Craig Campbell*

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Latrobe Region in Gippsland, to the east of Melbourne, is an area of dramatic contrasts. It contains one of the largest single deposits of brown coal in the world, and major forest industries, yet also provides many and varied opportunities to observe and enjoy native flora and fauna. Some of these opportunities have been enhanced through the cooperative efforts of conservationists, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, government at all levels, industry and community volunteers in developing parks and reserves open to the public. This booklet is designed to assist visitors and residents alike to experience the diverse wildlife to be found in the Latrobe region. It includes conservation parks and reserves easily accessible in a half day car trip from the central towns of Moe, Morwell and Traralgon in Latrobe City, 150 km east of Melbourne. It covers the region bounded by the Baw Baw plateau and the Thomson River to the north, the Strzelecki range to the south, by Mt Worth in the west and Holey Plains State Park in the east.

A first view of the Latrobe Region

The Latrobe Valley and the surrounding country not only supply three major inputs to Victoria's economy – electricity, water and timber, but contain some of its most varied natural environments. With a reasonably stable rainfall and diversity of landscape and natural habitats it provides residents and visitors with a variety of localities to see native plants and animals at their best.

Driving east from Melbourne along the Princes Freeway, visitors gain their first view of the Latrobe Valley while travelling down the hill 1 km past the Darnum township. From this viewpoint, the Baw Baws, a southern extension of the Great Dividing Range, on the northern side of the Valley, and the hills of the Strzelecki Ranges to the south clearly delineate the Valley itself. All that is visible to the east ahead of you is part of what was known as "The Moe Swamp". The swamp was created by hills between Moe and Morwell which partially dammed the Latrobe River. After construction of the railway to Sale in the late 1870s and following pressure from settlers for land, the swamp was drained from 1890 onwards. From the hills outside Moe, you will see the Yallourn Power Station to the north. Travelling on down the hills past Moe the Valley widens. Hazelwood Power Station with its eight stacks is almost directly in front of you and Loy Yang Power Station, located to the south of Traralgon, is seen in the distance. To the south the land is flatter for 10 – 15 km where the Morwell River flows on its journey to join the Latrobe River to the north. Just west of Morwell, the freeway crosses re-establishment wetlands, home to increasing numbers of birds. As you head past Morwell towards Traralgon, you will see the Traralgon Creek valley and a similar flatter landscape to the south. Here the Great Dividing Range is further north than it was out of Warragul. You are now at the edge of the Gippsland Plains.

Forming the Landscape

The regional topography varies considerably from the flat floor of the valley of the Latrobe River, in places less than 20 metres above sea level, through undulating hills to the steeper terrain of the ranges to the north and south. The Latrobe valley consists mainly of alluvial plains deposited from streams of the Pleistocene era and alluvial fans and high level terraces consisting of gravels, sands, silts and clays from the late Tertiary and recent periods. Flood plains and associated swamps are also important features. The Strzelecki range and the foothills to the north are fault-block ranges consisting of Cretaceous sandstones and mudstones.
In the past the rich alluvial plains have been more prone to land clearing than the steeper mountain regions. Some few remnant stands of eucalypts such as Forest Red Gum, Yarra Gum and Snow Gum remain. The Strzeleckis contain ferny cascading creeks amongst Mountain Ash remnant native forest.

What is visible today in the Latrobe region is the result of upheavals, intrusion, erosion and deposition of material over hundreds of millions of years. The top of the Baw Baws is late Devonian granite-like rock (granodiorite) which intruded marine sediments of Ordovician, Silurian and Early Devonian age. These sediments form the middle slopes of the Baw Baws. The granodiorite is visible as giant tors at Mushroom Rocks (below Mt Erica) and throughout the Baw Baw National Park such as at Mt Baw Baw and Mt St Gwinear, north of Erica. The granite is part of extensive granite outcrops of similar age found in Flinders Island and offshore islands off Wilson's Promontory, the Promontory itself and the Strathbogie and Warby Ranges to the north. Gold found at Walhalla is in the Early Devonian rocks there. Rocks of a similar age also surround the Thomson and Moondarra dams. The lower slopes of the Baw Baws have Tertiary (Pliocene) age rocks of marine and non-marine sediments including limestone.

The Strzelecki Ranges are of Early Cretaceous Age and were formed when sediment was deposited in vast lakes and swamps. Black coal at Narracan was a product of this time (as was the coalfield at Wonthaggi) and thin seams of coal-like material can be seen in many rock outcrops as well as plant fossils. It is quite possible that dinosaur remains will eventually be found as in similar rocks at Inverloch. Part of the Strzeleckis have a capping of basalt, the result of volcanic activity during the Oligocene-Miocene period, south of Trafalgar and extending to Mirboo North. If you are visiting the Lyrebird Walk or the Boolarra Railtrail, the rich red soil of the potato growing country will show you the extent of the lava flows. You can see the depth of a flow in Darnum where the rail line is close to the highway. The change in colour of the rock is clearly marked and is about 3 metres deep. Darnum is on the edge of another extensive lava field centred on Warragul.

The hills which created the Moe Swamp are of similar age to the lower slopes of the Baw Baws as are the flatter areas to the south of Morwell and Traralgon. It is beneath these deposits that the brown coal deposits

are found; the oldest coal seams are to the east (around Rosedale) of Eocene age and the youngest in the west at Yallourn of Late Miocene age. The brown coal was formed in swamps that receded westwards over some 30 million years. The coal seams are interleaved with clay indicating that the forest plants creating the coal came and went over time. Trees forming the coal were mainly conifers, including Kauri, *Araucaria* and trees now found only in Tasmania *(Phyllocladus, Dacridium* and *Podocarpus* – although Victoria does have one species of *Podocarpus).* In the younger Yallourn seams, the number of conifers is reduced, although the native cypress *Callitris* is present. Flowering plants related to modern day species are found – for example Casuarinas, Banksias, Epacrids and Olive Berry. Southern Beech pollen is common in all the brown coal but not the wood or leaves. Clearly the climate was changing through this period of coal deposition. You can catch glimpses of the open cut mine at Morwell from the highway and also of the Yallourn open cut on the road between Moe and Tyers. Tours of the Morwell mine are available through PowerWorks in Morwell.

The area surrounding the Latrobe River and its tributaries consists entirely of recent (Quaternary) age sediments. On your way to the Traralgon South Flora and Fauna Reserve at Traralgon South, you can see river terraces where the Traralgon Creek has cut down through its flood plain at least twice, due to uplift and/or lower sea levels.

The highs and lows of the Latrobe Region

From the top of the hill east of Darnum on a fault line, you can see the full extent of a longer fault line which created the western Strzelecki Ranges. This fault sweeps round in a curve to the south extending to San Remo and east to Moe. In the section that runs east/west, the fault is below the surface and the top layer of rocks is bent rather than displaced, forming a monocline. At this point the ridge is 350 metres above the Valley. There were probably two sets of movements along this fault line as it is possible to see the 'valley within valley' in the hills above Yarragon and Trafalgar where creeks have eroded the scarp forming a deep 'V' at the bottom and a shallow 'V' at the top. This indicates an initial movement when the shallow 'V' was formed and a subsequent displacement that led to much faster erosion forming the deep 'V'. The eastern and western Strzeleckis are raised blocks, or horsts. Horsts generally have fault lines as their boundaries. It is likely that the upward movement is continuing through small movements. An earthquake exceeding 1 on the Richter scale occurs every three days in Victoria, and the Strzeleckis have more than their fair share of them. Another hotspot for minor tectonic activity is round the Walhalla area.

Vegetation at the time of early European Settlement

The view from the hill out of Darnum in the 1840s would have been non-existent as you would have been in the middle of a damp forest of tall Mountain Grey Gums. At the bottom of

the hill the vegetation was swamp scrub and a swampy riparian complex. The earliest travellers by stagecoach complained of having to walk through a section just to the north called 'the gluepot', where they sank to their knees in mud. The lowest slopes of the Great Dividing Range were of lowland forest, now lost. The Strzelecki Ranges had damp and wet forest covering. One settler whilst clearing a 2 acre houseblock measured sixty Bluegums, 'all over 300 feet'. A government surveyor measured the tallest tree ever seen just south of Thorpdale on the Mirboo North – Trafalgar Road (after it was cut down!) at 367 feet (112 metres). Residents reported a decline of 20% in rainfall between 1880 and 1900. A bushfire in January 1898 burnt what remained of the uncleared forest in an area from Western Port Bay in the west to Mirboo North in the east, and from Warragul in the north to the Bass Strait coast in the south. Mt Worth State Park is a remnant of regrowth after the fire. Landcare groups are replanting and the animals are returning. Koalas are now found nearly all over the Strzeleckis, one of the few non-translocated populations in Victoria. Their genetic profile is quite distinct from those found in the rest of the state, which are descendants of koalas relocated to French and Phillip Islands early last century.

Today it is the Gippsland Plains that are the most depleted of their original vegetation. Ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) included Grassy Woodland, Gippsland Plain Grassy Woodland, Floodplain Riparian Woodland, Plains Grassy Forest and Box Ironbark Forest, all with distinctive sets of plants. The latter two have been reduced to around 3% of their original cover, with reserves containing tiny remnants set aside. You might look out for these on roadsides and railtrails.

1. Mount Worth State Park (map 97 B6)

Location and access

This heavily forested 1040 ha park is in a high rainfall area, located approximately 10 km south of Darnum, and accessible via Darnum-Allambee Road and Allambee Estate Road, the latter part being winding and gravelled. The main park entrance is near Moonlight Creek.

Facilities

There are picnic tables, fireplaces and toilets located at the park entrance near Moonlight Creek. Among an extensive network of tracks radiating from the picnic area is one which follows the Moonlight Creek and has gentle gradients suitable for wheelchair use. Another popular track is the Giant Circuit, which features 'The Standing Giant', a very large Mountain Ash.

Flora

The park contains magnificent stands of eucalypts such as Mountain Ash and Mountain Grey Gum, abundant Blackwoods and Silver Wattles and beautiful moist ferny gullies. Rare plants include Netted Brake, Slender Tree Fern and Skirted Tree Fern. Key plant species include Sassafras, Snowy Daisy-Bush, Victorian Christmas Bush, Blanket Leaf and Hazel Pomaderris.

Fauna

Birdlife is abundant in the park with 91 species recorded. Lyrebirds and Eastern Whipbirds are commonly heard and sometimes seen scratching amongst the leaf litter on the ground while Crimson Rosellas, King Parrots, Olive Whistlers, Eastern Spinebills and Lewin's Honeyeaters occupy the forest canopy. Tawny Frogmouths, Powerful Owls and the rare Sooty Owl can be heard at dusk. The park is also home to animals such as the Common Wombat, Swamp Wallaby, Short-beaked Echidna, Brush-tailed Possum, Ring-tailed Possum and Feather-tailed Glider. Koalas are often sighted and Platypus and Eastern Water Rats swim in the creeks and burrow in their banks.

History

It is believed that aboriginal tribes, including the Briakalong and Bunurong, frequented the area although there is no direct evidence. Logging occurred in the park between the 1920s and 1940s with up to twelve timber mills operating in close proximity removing most of the mature trees. There is much evidence of relics of the timber industry in the park including saw-dust heaps, old mill boilers and old tramways used for hauling the timber to the mills. The park was officially declared in 1979 after about eight years campaigning by the Warragul Field Naturalists Club led by Jack

Green-comb Spider-orchid, *Arachnorchis parva*
Ralph Laby

Prostanthera galbraithiae
Ken Harris

Butterfly Orchid, *Sarcochilus australis*
Ralph Laby

Old Myrtle Beech tree in Tarra Bulga NP,
Craig Campbell

Snow Gums and Trigger plants in Baw Baw NP
Estelle Adams

Fungi in Tarra Bulga NP *(Mycena sp.)*
Estelle Adams

Male Superb Lyrebird displaying at Tarra Bulga NP
Craig Campbell

King Parrot
David Stickney

Whistling Tree-frog
Ken Harris

Brooks with support from the Warragul Shire.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎131963

2. Glen Nayook Reserve (map 80 H8)

Location and access

Glen Nayook Reserve is a remnant of a mountain ash rainforest and contains a delightful fern glen. It is situated on the east branch of the Tarago River at the

end of Paynters Road, Neerim Junction. Located approx 30km north of Warragul, it can be accessed via either Powelltown or Neerim South.

Facilities

The track has recently been upgraded with a return walk taking approximately 30 minutes. Some sections of the track are quite steep requiring walkers to be moderately fit. The track is not suitable for access by wheelchairs. Picnic tables and seats are available but the closest public toilets are at Neerim South or Noojee.

Flora and Fauna

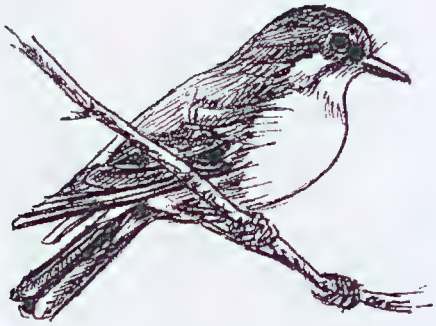
A feature of the vegetation in the reserve is the picturesque tree fern gully where the river runs underground for 100 metres, with some rainforest species including Myrtle Beech and Southern Sassafras. The canopy is dominated by Mountain Ash with a dense understorey of Blackwoods and Silver Wattles. The wet gullies support a diverse range of ferns, fungi and mosses. Wildlife including wombats, possums, Swamp Wallabies and lyrebirds inhabit the reserve.

History

The 9 ha area was reserved by the Crown in 1907 as a site for public recreation. The reserve is suitable for a short visit or picnic and has been a popular spot for visitors since 1914.

Information

The recently formed Friends of Glen Nayook assist Parks Victoria with ongoing maintenance and promotion of the reserve.



3. Uralla Nature Reserve (map 97 D5)

Location and Access

Uralla Reserve is a 40 ha bushland reserve situated on the edge of the town of Trafalgar on Giles Road, about 2 km south of the Princes Highway.

Facilities

A small car park is located just outside the main entrance to the reserve on Giles Road. An information board and tables are provided in a picnic area 50 m inside this entrance and at various locations along the tracks there are seats for resting and viewing. There are no toilets. The main walking track, about 3 km long, heads up a steep hill through stringybark forest and then descends through shady fern gullies, before winding back to the car park. A disabled access track into a fern gully is being constructed in stages.

Flora

Uralla Reserve is predominantly damp forest with the main eucalypts being Mountain Grey Gum, Messmate and Silvertop. The understorey includes Handsome Flat Pea, olearias, acacias and native grasses. There are beautiful damp gullies with moss covered trunks and glades of ferns. In spring there are many orchids and small flowering herbs along the tracks.

Fauna

Uralla is rich in birdlife, with more than 50 species recorded so far. Thornbills, Grey Fantails, Eastern Yellow Robins, Golden Whistlers and Grey Shrike-thrushes abound. Brown Gerygones, rare this far west in Victoria, are found throughout the reserve. Huge gum trees provide nesting hollows for rosellas, and a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles has a nest high up in one of these trees. Uralla is also rich in forest invertebrates such as snails, beetles and velvet worms, and the reserve is home to one of Victoria's rarest native millipedes.

History

The main walking track heading up the hill was the original bullock track from Trafalgar to Thorpdale. There was sand extraction and charcoal burning in the reserve around WWI, and it was last logged in the 1960s. This valuable patch of bush, close to the town, was recognised as such by residents in the 1960s and purchased using funds from the Ross Foundation. It is now owned by the Trust for Nature and administered by the Uralla Nature Reserve committee.

Information

Baw Baw Shire ☎56242411

4. Narracan Falls (map 97 E6)

Location and access

From Trafalgar, take the Thorpdale/Mirboo North Road (C469). About 7 km from the highway turn left into Narracan Connection Road. Turn right into Falls Road after about 3 km and Narracan Falls is 1.5 km on the left. There is a car park and a large picnic area with tables and fireplaces, but no toilets.

Geology

Some 23 million years ago, basalt lava of the consistency of honey flowed into a depression on the land surface (probably a small creek valley), filling it up. Now the creek has re-established itself and is gradually wearing away the very resistant ancient basalt flow. The basalt is most vulnerable at the shrinkage joints formed as the basalt cooled. The shrinkage created large columns, most hexagonal in cross-section and up to one metre across. The waterfall is the result of wearing and breakage of these columns.

Narracan Falls is not a large waterfall but is attractive and interesting. You can see the pieces of columns at the bottom of the waterfall, accessible via a track which is slippery when wet. The basalt (known as the Thorpdale Volcanics) provides the area with its rich red soil. Much of Victoria's potato crop is grown in this district.

5. Blue Rock Lake (map 97 D2)

This large lake was formed in 1979 when the Tanjil River was dammed at a point 5 km from Willow Grove.

Its name originated from an early gold mine operated in the area around 1858. There is a pioneer monument near the dam.

There are three designated picnic areas with toilets, fireplaces and boat launching ramps. Swimming, fishing and both non-powered and small powered boats are permitted.

The picnic site off Cervi Road on the eastern side of the lake is a pleasant observation spot for birds.

The lake is well signposted when entering the township of Willow Grove.

6. Edward Hunter Heritage Bush Reserve (map 338 K10)

Location and Access

The reserve is located in the southern part of Moe and is bounded by Wirraway Street, Borrmans Street and Coalville Road. The two main entrances with car parks are both on the west side of Coalville Road about 1.5 km from the Moe central roundabout located over the railway line.

Facilities

There are two picnic areas which provide a rotunda shelter and seating near the dam wall and a large A-frame structure and seating in the more southerly car park off Coalville Rd. There are no toilet facilities.

Flora

The reserve incorporates 57 ha of undulating bush, and is best described as a passive recreation area catering particularly for walkers. It has a dominance of Messmate and Narrow-leaf Peppermint, which is typical of the area. It is noted for its orchids, having 45 species. The creeks in the reserve feature at least eight species of fern.

Fauna

Over 40 bird species have been recorded, mainly bush birds, but many water birds can be seen on and around the dam. The dam has a large open section of water, with small breeding islands and reedy edges which make an ideal habitat for birds.

History

The reserve, named after one time Narracan Shire Councillor Edward Hunter, was originally a water catchment area with a storage reservoir that supplied fresh water to the Moe Railway Station for steam trains. The water was also piped to the railway houses, which were the first in Moe to have reticulated water. The reservoir and surrounding area was considered so picturesque that at the time it was a popular area for swimming and for wedding photos. The site was burnt out during the 1939 bushfires and logged up until the 1950s.
In the early 1950s, before Moe had a public swimming pool, the dam within the reserve served as the local swimming pool. Subsequently the use of the reserve declined when the community successfully lobbied for an Olympic-sized pool.

Information

Friends of the Edward Hunter Reserve, contactable through Latrobe City
☎ 1300 367 700

7. Moe Botanic Gardens (map 338 K8) and Moe-Yallourn Rail Trail (map 97 F4)

Location and access

The main car park of the Moe Botanic Gardens, beside the Narracan Creek in the centre of Moe, is accessed from Botanic Drive. This short road runs off Narracan Drive which links Moe and Newborough on the northern side of the railway line.
The 8 km Moe-Yallourn Rail Trail starts near the Moe Botanic Gardens which is a convenient access point. The trail first crosses Narracan Creek via an attractive bridge and heads through Newborough towards Lake Narracan, which is well worth a detour for a lunch stop. As the trail leaves

Newborough it passes through farmland and provides an expanse of views towards the Yallourn W Power Station.

Facilities

The gardens are a pleasant recreation area with exotic and native trees providing shade. There are barbecues, picnic facilities and toilets.

Flora and Fauna

Much of the trail is screened by trees and shrubs which provide habitat for woodland birds such as Red Wattlebirds, Grey Shrike-thrushes and Superb Fairy Wrens. The managing committee is progressively replanting local species and eradicating weeds.

Information

Moe-Yallourn Rail Trail Committee, contactable through Latrobe City
☎ 1300 367 700
Rail Trails www.railtrails.org.au

8. Lake Narracan (map 97 G4)

Location and access

The lake is situated 5 km north of Moe. Public access is from Newborough via John Field Drive and Sullivans Track.

Facilities

The Latrobe River enters the lake at its western extremity at Beck's Bridge, which is a good area for birdwatching and fishing. The lake has a surface area of about 300 ha and is a popular destination in Latrobe City for bushwalking, picnics, fishing and various water sports On the southern side there is a boardwalk opposite the caravan park which links a safe swimming area to Broadwood Reserve, an undisturbed patch of native woodland. Boat ramps are located along the South Shore Road. Jet ski club events, which attract national and international competitors, are held in Hall's Bay, accessed from the northern side, via Yallourn North. Public toilets are located at the boardwalk and at the John Field Drive entrance.

Flora and Fauna

There are open grasslands and woodlands, low vegetation, lagoons, rushes and reed beds surrounding the lake. Ninety species of birds have been recorded including King Parrots, rosellas, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, Bell Miners, Olive-backed Orioles, Fairy Martins and many small bush birds.

History

The lake was originally constructed in the 1950s to provide water for the

Yallourn Power Station works area. The Woorabinda School Camp is located on the northern shore and a Naval Reserve Cadet facility is based on the southern shore.

Information

Lake Narracan Committee of Management, contactable through Latrobe City ☎ 1300 367 700

9. Ollerton Avenue Bushland Reserve (map 339 M8)

Location and access

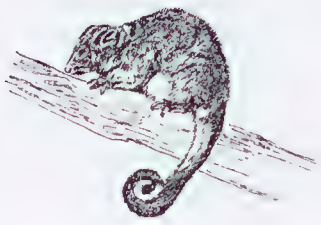
A small but important remnant of Gippsland Plains Grassy Forest vegetation has been reserved within a new housing estate in Newborough. Many native plant species in the reserve are of regional or state significance.

Facilities

Paths provide pleasant access from neighbouring streets and a children's playground is provided.

Flora and Fauna

The site consists of two areas: a park-like area of trees with an understorey of native plants, orchids and grasses which is regularly slashed, and a second area with little disturbance to the groundcover. A feature of the reserve is the variety of eucalypts, with seven species represented, including *Eucalyptus conspicua* (Swamp Stringybark) and *E. fulgens* (Scent Bark).



Information

A community based Committee of Management, established by Latrobe City in 2004, is working on fencing and rubbish and weed removal. Further flora and fauna studies, signage, plant regeneration and development of an interpretive trail are planned.

10. Moondarra State Park (map 97 G2)

Location and access

This park of 6,292 ha of forest on the northern edge of the Latrobe Valley can be reached from the Princes Highway at Moe by following the Moe-Rawson Road (C466). Roads throughout the area are narrow and winding, and may carry log trucks. Some unsurfaced tracks in the park are suitable only for 4WD vehicles.

Facilities

There is a grassy, well-shaded camping area with fireplaces, pit toilets and picnic tables on the banks of the Tyers River on Seninis Track. Barbecues and picnic tables (but no toilets) are also provided at Tyers Bridge on the Moe-Rawson Road. There are no dedicated walking tracks in the park, but there are numerous 4WD tracks to facilitate exploration on foot.

Geology

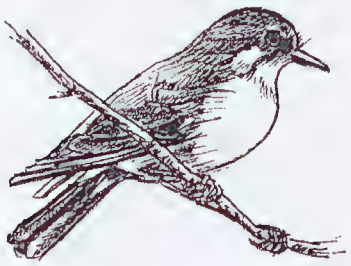
The soils are derived from the Tertiary and Palaeozoic sediments of the Moondarra Plateau and are often poorly drained, creating swampy areas, even on the hillsides.

Flora

The park has extensive areas of forest and woodland vegetation. Common eucalypts include Silvertop, Yertchuk, Messmate, Stringybark and Broadleaf Peppermint. The woodland is of an unusual vegetation type, considered to be of state significance. Its features include banksia and hakea shrubs over a ground layer of spear grass, sedges and lilies. There are notable wildflower displays, and 16 species of native orchids have been recorded along Seninis Track. Thickets of Prickly Tea-tree and Scented Paperbark occur on low-lying poorly drained areas.

Fauna

Nearly 100 species of birds have been recorded and the park is also home to echidnas, wombats, possums, gliders, Swamp Wallabies, Brown Antechinus, various reptiles and many butterflies including Imperial and Wood White Butterflies.



History

The Moondarra grazing run, covering much of the area included in the park, was first taken up in the early 1850s. Gold was discovered at Walhalla, Toombon and Red Jacket in the 1860s, and this eventually led to the construction in 1899 of a narrow gauge railway line from Moe to Walhalla, the route of which can be traced through the southern section of the park. Access is via Andersons and Crabhole Tracks off the Moe-Rawson Road. The remains of a number of timber tramways are also still visible. The park was proclaimed in January 1986.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎ 13 19 63.

11. Tyers Junction (map 81 G9)

Location and access

An attractive picnic area is located at the junction of the east and west branches of the Tyers River, to the north of the Moondarra State Park. It adjoins the Caringal Scout Camp and may be accessed via a 6 km gravel road from the Moe-Rawson Road, via a junction approximately 3 km south of Erica township.

Facilities

The picnic area has tables and seats, and camping is permitted on the flats beside the west branch near Caringal. There are pleasant extended walking tracks along both branches of the Tyers River. Parts of these tracks follow old

tramway formations from the timber logging days.

Fauna

The area is a good place to observe many bushland bird species.

12. Walhalla Historic Area and Australian Alps Walking Track (map 81 J9)

Location and access

The historic town of Walhalla is set in the steep wooded valley of Stringers Creek, to the east of the Thomson River. It is most conveniently accessed by heading north from Moe to Erica, then continuing on to Parkers Corner and turning right to the attractive visitor base of Rawson. Just beyond Rawson, the winding road to Walhalla requires a left turn off the Rawson-Tyers Road.
A pleasant option is to time arrival at Thomson station, at the Thomson River Bridge, and ride the restored Walhalla Goldfields Railway through Stringers Creek Gorge to the Walhalla terminus, with its replica of the original 1910 station building.

Facilities

Walhalla Historic Township has a pretty, meandering streetscape with cafes, a general store, pub, early band rotunda, a museum, craft shops, visitor accommodation and picnic areas with toilets. There are many excellent walks around the town, such as those to the historic cemetery and the cricket pitch perched high on a hill top. Guided tours of the Long Tunnel Extended Mine are available.
The famous 650 km Australian Alps Walking Track starts from Walhalla and leads through Baw Baw National Park and the Alpine National Park on its way to the Kosciusko region of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. From Walhalla, the track initially follows the old bed of a tramway which was built to supply timber to the mines. It crosses the Thomson River via an historic 46 m long iron bridge restored for use by walkers.

Geology

Beds of Silurian rock occur in the Walhalla area. Quartz veins occur less frequently here than in the Ordovician rocks which outcrop in large areas of Victoria, but may be exceptionally rich in gold, as at Walhalla. Cohen's Reef runs north-south along Stringers Creek, and one of the mines established on it, Long Tunnel, was productive for some fifty years.

History

Walhalla was a boom town during the years of gold mining in Gippsland from the 1860s, somewhat later than the big rushes in western and central Victoria. It served as a supply as well as mining

town, with satellite settlements such as Maiden Town and Mormon Town. Walhalla housed perhaps 4,000-6,000 people at its peak. In fifty years from 1863, Cohen's Reef (see above) produced about 1,500,000 ounces of gold. The town declined during the First World War (1914-1918), soon after the narrow gauge railway from Moe opened in 1910. The line was regarded as a masterpiece of engineering at the time, and the final section to Walhalla required numerous trestle bridges and deep cuttings in challenging mountain terrain.

Information

Australian Alps Walking Track website www.australianalps.deh.gov.au/parks/
Parks Victoria ☎ 13 19 63.

13. Baw Baw National Park – Mt Erica/Mushroom Rocks & Mt St Gwinear (map 81 G8 & G7)

Location and access

Baw Baw National Park is situated 50 km north of the Latrobe Valley, and the eastern side is reached by travelling north from Moe, through Erica and up the Thomson Valley Road. There are two main car parks, one for Mt Erica and the other for Mt St Gwinear, which are both signposted off this road.

Facilities

There are toilets and picnic tables at both car parks. The Mt St Gwinear car park is by far the bigger of the two, and it has a large, fully enclosed public shelter which includes a disabled toilet. Well-marked tracks leave from these car parks, and there are displays with maps and Park Notes available. The Mt Erica track is a section of the Australian Alps Walking Track. Starting from the Mt Erica car park, it leads up to Mushroom Rocks (1.5 km), a group of huge granitic tors, then continues on at a steep gradient to the Mt Erica summit. The Mt St Gwinear track climbs gently to the Mt St Gwinear summit then joins the Australian Alps Walking Track north of Mt Erica. Within the park this track traverses the Baw Baw plateau, passing Mt St Phillack (the highest peak at 1567m); a side path leads to Mt Baw Baw and on down to its ski village. As these walks are in sub-alpine elevations, walkers should always be prepared for sudden changes in weather.

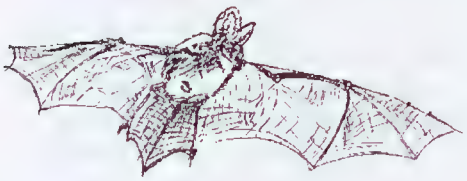
Flora

The park contains a diverse array of plants, with tall trees along the paths leading to the plateau, snow gum woodland on the plateau with some treeless areas of alpine heathland. Many rare and significant species occur, such as the Baw Baw Daisy *Brachyscombe obovata* and Spreading Clubmoss *Lycopodium scariosum.* Mountain Ash, Silver Wattle and numerous ferns line the start of the Mt Erica track, and as it rises up to Mushroom Rocks Snow Gums and Tingaringy Gums appear. Myrtle Beech and Southern Sassafras are found in some wet gullies. The understorey is

extremely diverse, including Mueller's Bush-pea, Alpine Pepper and Alpine Mint-bush. The Mt St Gwinear track, starting at a higher altitude, is flanked by Alpine Ash which quickly give way to Snow Gums. The indigenous Baw Baw Berry is widespread on the plateau, and in the flowering season the ground is lit up with purple, white and yellow flowers – Trigger Plants, Snow Daisies and Brachyscombes to name a few. In depressions on the plateau Wet Alpine Heathland is to be found, with Candleheath, Sphagnum Moss and a range of small flowering herbs such as Sky Lilies and Snow Gentians.

Fauna

This 13,000 ha park contains many species of birds and animals. More than eighty species of birds have been recorded. Lyrebirds, Eastern Whipbirds and Pilotbirds may be seen feeding on the gully floors. Five species of Robins may be seen: Rose, Pink, Flame, Scarlet and Eastern Yellow. Currawongs, honeyeaters, thornbills and scrub-wrens are common. Possums (Leadbeater's, Ringtail, Mountain Brushtail) and Gliders (Sugar, Greater and Yellow-bellied) are all found as well as bats, wombats, wallabies, antechinus and platypus. The threatened Baw Baw Frog is unlikely to be seen.



History

The park was declared in 1979; the name Baw Baw is said to be aboriginal and to mean 'an echo'. Ferdinand von Mueller, the government botanist, made the first recorded trip to the Baw Baw Plateau in 1860, collecting over 60 plant species. In 1877 the first track was cut by gold seekers moving between gold fields at Reefton and Aberfeldy. From 1906 a walking track between Warburton and Walhalla which crossed the plateau became one of the most popular walks in Victoria. There were three huts along the track within the park, but they were burnt down in the 1939 bushfires. The Australian Alps Walking Track follows part of this route.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎ 13 19 63.

Further information on the plants can be found in Strickland, Kathie and Peter, *Sub-Alpine Flora of the Baw Baw Plateau, Victoria,* Kareelah, 1997.

14. Mirboo North to Boolarra Rail Trail (map 97 D8)

Location and access

The trail starts behind the Grand Ridge Brewery & Restaurant at Mirboo North, or alternatively from the Boolarra end, at Railway Park near the Old Pub (1884) Café Bar in the centre of the town.

Facilities

There are gardens in both towns with picnic facilities and toilets.

Flora and Fauna

From Mirboo North to Boolarra, there is a drop in altitude of 277 m over the length of this 12.8 km trail. The trail passes through high rainfall country, which was home to some of the world's tallest trees. Now largely logged, regrowth vegetation of Silver Wattle, Blackwood and Messmate can be seen over the deep cuttings and embankments. About 4.6 km from Mirboo North, the Darlimurla Road runs parallel to the trail on the north side for 1km to the site of the Darlimurla Station. A huge Mountain Grey Gum, the 'Big Tree', is a few metres along a signposted turnoff about 300 metres to the west of the station site. The remainder of the trail traverses bush and pasture to Boolarra, providing views of the rolling hills.

Information

Rail Trails www.railtrails.org.au

15. Lyrebird Forest Walk (map 97 D8)

Location and access

The Lyrebird Forest Walk reserve protects 45ha of damp forest typical of the Strzeleckis; it is accessed from the Morwell-Mirboo North Road (Strzelecki Highway B460), 2.8 km before the Mirboo North township.

Facilities

There is a car park and attractive picnic area amongst tall trees with tables but no toilets. The longer of two marked circuit walks involves one and a half hours of easy walking. The Coral Fern Gully walk entails a shorter circuit with gentler gradients.

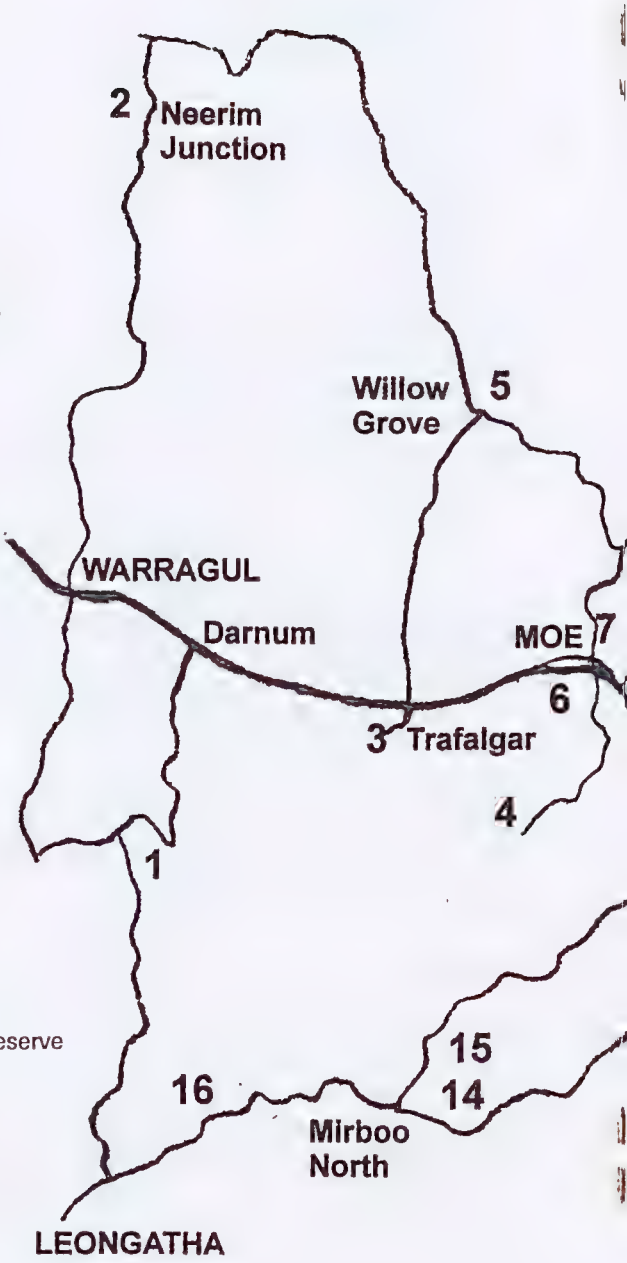
Flora and Fauna

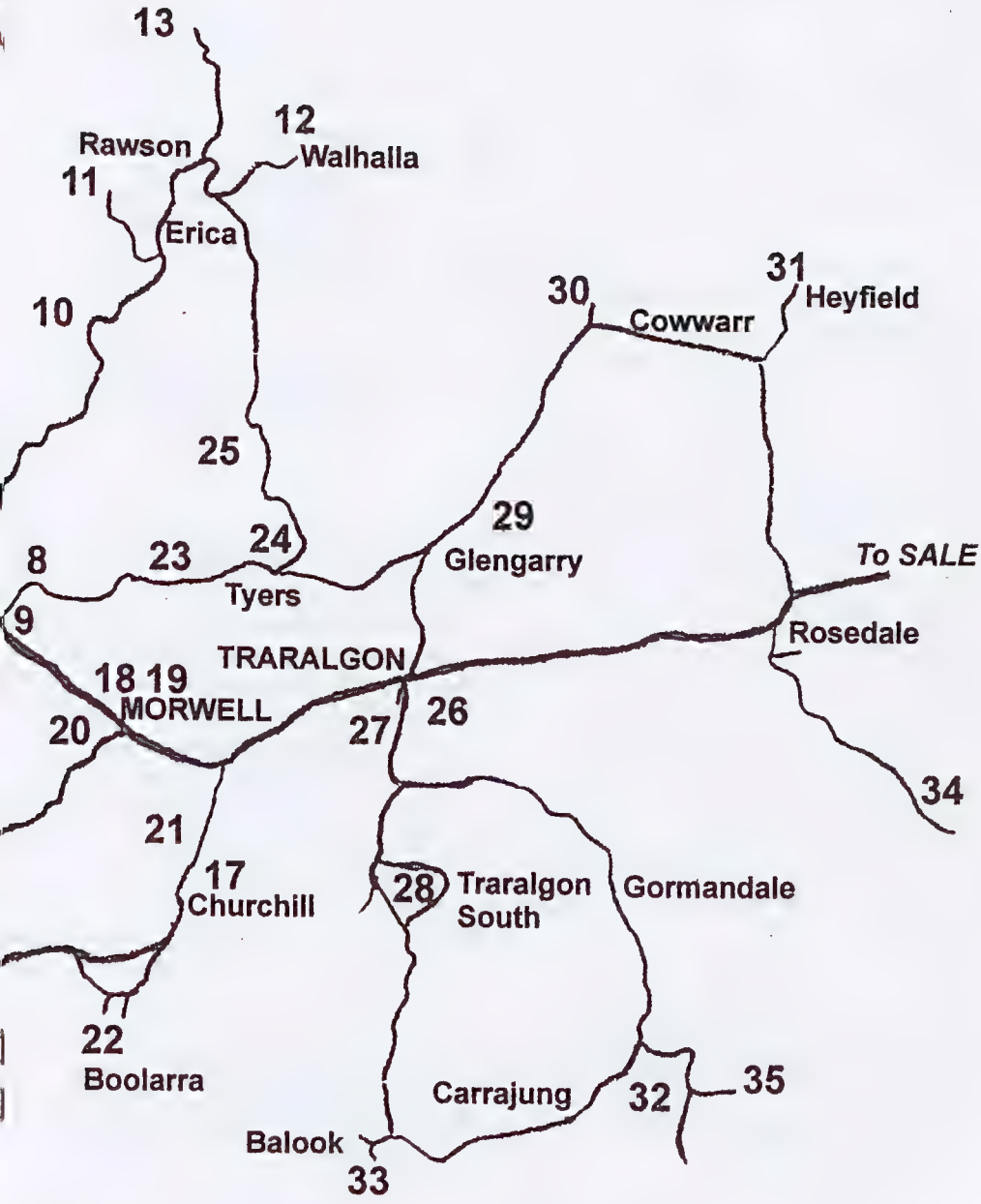
The main track common to both circuits follows the gully of the Little Morwell River through tall Messmates and Mountain Grey Gums with a thick understorey of shrubs and ferns. The longer trail then proceeds uphill alongside open farmland to the drier more open stringybark forest of the ridge, before returning to the picnic area. The reserve is noted for its rich

diversity of fungi seen in late autumn and winter. Wombats, koalas, Swamp Wallabies, echidnas, platypus and many nocturnal native animals inhabit the area that is also rich in bird life.

Key

1 Mount Worth State Park
2 Glen Nayook
3 Uralla Nature Reserve
4 Narracan Falls
5 Blue Rock Lake
6 Edward Hunter Heritage Bush Reserve
7 Moe Botanic Gardens & Moe-Yallourn Rail Trail
8 Lake Narracan
9 Ollerton Avenue Bushland Reserve
10 Moondarra State Park
11 Tyers Junction
12 Walhalla – Australian Alps Walking Track
13 Baw Baw National Park – Mt Erica/Mushroom Rocks & Mt St Gwinear
14 Mirboo North to Boolarra Rail Trail
15 Lyrebird Forest Walk
16 Mossvale Park
17 Mathison Park, Churchill
18 Eric Lubcke Yarra Gum Conservation Reserve
19 Crinigan Road Reserve
20 Morwell River Wetlands
21 Brodribb Road Wetlands
22 Morwell National Park
23 Wirilda Environment Park
24 Jean Galbraith Memorial Wildflower Reserve
25 Tyers Park
26 Victory Park, Traralgon
27 Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve
28 Traralgon South Flora and Fauna Reserve
29 Gippsland Plains Rail Trail
30 Cowwarr Weir
31 Heyfield Wetlands
32 Jungadale Conservation Reserve
33 Tarra Bulga National Park
34 Holey Plains State Park
35 Mullundung State Forest

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Traralgon
Gormandale
Churchill
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Boolarra
Carrajung
32
35
Balook
33

History

A small sawmill was once located in the picnic area and evidence of early logging activities can still be seen. The reserve was established in the early 1960s.

Information

An active Friends group is working with Parks Victoria ☎ 13 19 63 to maintain bridges and boardwalks, and tracks and picnic facilities have been upgraded.

16. Mossvale Park (map 97 B8)

Location and access

The park is situated in the Berry's Creek district, between Mirboo North and Leongatha. The signposted entrance is on the north side of the Strzelecki Highway (B460) approximately 10km from Mirboo North.

Facilities

There is a substantial picnic shelter with a table, ample bench seats and an open fireplace, a nearby toilet block and a comprehensive children's playground. There are plenty of attractive picnic spots in grassy areas under the trees or in the sun.

Flora and Fauna

Mossvale Park is noted for its collection of exotic trees, mainly of deciduous and coniferous varieties, and includes oak and plane trees over one hundred years old. Fifteen trees in the park are listed on the South Gippsland Register of Significant Trees on public land; five of these are on the Victorian Register. These latter trees include a magnificent Chestnut-leaved Oak, one of the original plantings, along with various plane and other oak trees. An endemic plant area is being established at the northern end of the reserve, near the bridge, building on a stand of Strzelecki Gum located there. Friendly but voracious possums have been found to attack some of the young exotic plants.

History

The current park was originally part of a 1000 acre parcel of forest and scrub on the western branch of the Tarwin River acquired in 1878 by the nurseryman Thomas Moss. He established a new nursery on a section of this property which operated until his death in 1916. In 1946 about 10-11 acres (4.5 ha) was purchased jointly by the Woorayl and Mirboo North Shires and declared a public reserve. A committee of management together with the local Apex Club developed and maintained it from that time. In the mid 1960's the Shire of Woorayl assumed management responsibility. Since then the significant trees have been named and there has been extensive planting and replanting, including contributions from members of the Moss family.

Information

Ellis, Mary, *Significant Trees of South Gippsland.* South Gippsland Conservation Society and South Gippsland Shire Council, 2002.
Lyndon, Ellen, *The Story of Mossvale Park.* Woorayl Shire Historical Society, 1994.

17. Mathison Park, Churchill (map 97 H6)

Location and access

Mathison Park, of area 38 ha, is located within the Churchill township on the eastern side of Monash Way (C456) and Tramway Road. It is being progressively developed as a regional park with a focus on Gippsland indigenous flora but also with representation of some Australian and international species. The most convenient access point is the car park on the northern edge of the park, on Mackeys Road, a short distance to the east of its junction with Tramway Road (which links Churchill and Morwell East).

Facilities

The Apex Picnic Area on Mackeys Road, on the northern edge of Lake Hyland, includes a playground, fishing platform and disabled toilet. A second picnic area surrounds the ruins of Robert Hare's farmhouse (built in 1920) in the centre of the park. A formed gravel walking and cycling track forms part of the Eel Hole Creek Recreation Corridor, leading south from the Mackeys Road picnic area, along the western edge of Lake Hyland to the Kurnai College – Churchill campus on Northways Road, where there is a pedestrian access point. An extension of the track network on the eastern side of the lake is planned.

Flora and Fauna

Over the past twenty-five years, community volunteers have revegetated a number of areas including the surrounds of Eel Hole Creek. The focus in the planting of trees, shrubs, ground covers, ferns and grasses is on species indigenous to Gippsland. An attractive Gippsland Arboretum, celebrating the centenary of Australia's Federation, is located on the south-western corner of the park. Trees to be seen here include acacias, she-oaks and eucalypts. A Koori Grove near the farmhouse site displays a number of plants of significance to the Ganai people. A representative grove of Australian and New Zealand conifers is being established on the slopes to the west of the ruins. Extensive wetlands fringe Lake Hyland, and these will be developed as a feature of the park. The lake and its surrounds provide wetland habitat for birds, at least five species of frog, reptiles including various skinks and fish. Water birds to be seen include the Eastern Swamphen, Eurasian Coot, White-faced and White-necked Heron, Great and Little Egrets, various ducks and the occasional pelican.

History

In 1876, Thomas O'Halloran selected 210 acres of land in the Hazelwood district, and this was later acquired by Robert Hare who built the farmhouse mentioned previously, using stone quarried on the property. Subsequently, the property was sub-divided and then compulsorily acquired for the new town of Churchill in 1963. The northern section was not required for housing and so became a public park as we know it today. The park was named in honour of Wal Mathison, Secretary for the Shire of Morwell from 1947-1962. It is now controlled by Latrobe City and overseen by the Mathison Park Development Committee. The Friends of Mathison Park make a big contribution to its development and upkeep.

Information

Latrobe City ☎ 1300 367 700

18. Eric Lubcke Yarra Gum Conservation Reserve (map 340 C6)

This small reserve was created through extensive plantings of the local provenance of *Eucalyptus yarraensis,* which was common to the area and is now classed as becoming rare in Victoria. Extensive coal mining operations south of Morwell destroyed many of these trees. Eric Lubcke was a local naturalist who worked tirelessly in conservation and revegetation. Access is via Maryvale Crescent off Commercial Road south of the Rose Garden at the western end of the Morwell CBD. The reserve which has no facilities is located at the end of Maryvale Crescent.

Information

Latrobe City ☎ 1300 367 700

19. Crinigan Road Reserve (map 340 K2)

Location and access

The reserve is on the northern edge of Morwell and can be accessed by travelling north on Maryvale Road and turning right into Crinigan Road. There is a car park on Fairway Drive off Crinigan Road. The reserve is 39 ha in area and is one of the few natural vegetation remnants in the Morwell area.

Facilities

Several walking tracks open to the public radiate from the main car park. There is an open shelter with seats, picnic tables and toilet facilities.

Flora and Fauna

The reserve is classified as open forest dominated by Narrow-leaf Peppermint

and Manna Gum with scattered But-but and a diverse understorey. The 150 species of plants recorded in the reserve include 28 species of native terrestrial orchids. October is a good time to see Chocolate Lilies, Waxlips, bluebells, daisies and many other flowers including other orchid species. Despite its relative isolation as bushland, 63 species of birds have been recorded within the reserve, including lots of bush birds such as wrens, thornbills and scrubwrens. Look out for the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and three species of whistler.

History

The Park was originally purchased by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria in 1960 for possible development and to restrict residential growth on the northern boundary of Morwell. It was later purchased by the Shire of Morwell, and an active friends group is developing and maintaining the reserve.

Information

Friends of Crinigan Reserve, contactable through Latrobe City
☎ 1300 367 700

20. Morwell River Wetlands (map 340 A5)

Location and access

The wetlands are situated 2 km west of the Morwell township and are spanned by the Princes Highway. The larger part lies on the southern side of the Highway. The most convenient access is from the Strzelecki Highway (B460) 0.5 km south of the turn-off to Mirboo North from the western end of Commercial Road. At the time of writing, entry to the wetlands requires permission from the Environment Officer, International Power Hazelwood.

Facilities

Parking is available on the edge of the wetlands and there is a water-sampling platform for use by school groups and others. There are no other facilities.

Flora and Fauna

Several thousand locally indigenous trees have been planted since the wetlands were created in 1999. Extensive planting of *Melaleuca ericifolia* has occurred around the perimeter and *Eucalyptus strzeleckii* has been replanted to preserve this

vulnerable species. Bird nesting boxes and bat roost boxes have been installed to attract water birds and bats into the wetlands. Birdlife is abundant for most of the year. Black swans and several species of duck nest here and are present all year. Waterbirds including pelicans, herons, egrets and spoonbills are often seen on the open water, and Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels may be seen round the muddy verges. Less easily spotted are the Brown Bitterns and crakes that inhabit the extensive reed beds.

History

The wetlands are being progressively developed by International Power as a replacement for wetlands to be lost to their coal-field development. Construction started in 1999 when extensive landscaping of the area took place, including alteration of the flow of the Morwell River and creation of islands. The area was first flooded in April 2001.
To speed up the development of biodiversity at the site, Swamp Paperbark root balls, woody debris and ephemeral mud containing a rich assortment of aquatic biota were transferred from the existing wetland.

21. Brodribb Road Wetland (map 97 H6)

Location and access

This wetland to the west of Monash Way (C456) between Morwell and Churchill includes a small water body offering good birdwatching opportunities. From the Princes Freeway at Morwell take the Churchill exit south along Monash Way. Brodribb Road is about 5 km on the right heading towards Hazelwood Power Station. The Wetland entrance is situated 300 metres from the intersection on the left. At the time of writing, entry to the wetlands requires permission from the Environment Officer, International Power Hazelwood.

Facilities

A bird hide has been built to facilitate birdwatching and there is adequate parking. There are no other facilities in the wetland.

Flora and Fauna

There has been extensive tree planting of local indigenous species including acacias, melaleucas and eucalypts. More trees will be planted as the wetland matures.
Several species of ducks, waterbirds and waders are present in the wetlands and can be seen and photographed at close quarters from the birdhide. There are native fish and frogs in the pond, and several species of insectivorous bats roost in bat boxes located to the south of the wetland.

History

The original water body was known by locals as the Lily Pond, and in recent times its perimeter has been graded to encourage waders and other water birds. The bird hide was constructed in 1999 and a wheelchair accessible path to an observation platform was added later. Extensive landscaping and tree planting were undertaken by International Power Hazelwood as part of its development of the site.

22. Morwell National Park (map 97 H7)

Location and access

The park of 500 ha is situated in the northern foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges 16 km south of Morwell and contains essentially fifty to one hundred year old regrowth. The original section can be reached by taking the Churchill freeway exit onto Monash Way and turning left about 2 km south of Churchill onto Junction Road. On reaching the end of this road, turn right into Jumbuk Road. The Kerry Road car park signpost is located on the left about 400 metres downhill from the intersection. In the newer section of the park the Billys Creek car park is accessed from Junction Road, and an alternative car park lies at the end of Braniffs Road.

Facilities

The attractive Kerry Road picnic area provides tables, a gas barbecue, toilets and information. There are two main walking tracks in the original section, both accessed from the picnic area. The Fosters Gully Nature Walk provides an excellent introduction to the natural features of the park; Lyndon's Clearing is a short diversion from this track and provides an alternative picnic area. The longer Stringybark Ridge Track leads through drier forest, abounding in orchids in the spring. In the newer section, the Billys Creek Walk leads into a deep enclosed valley dominated by large Manna Gums and connects with a network of tracks including a link to the original section. There are picnic tables by the Junction Road car park and at the Billys Creek Weir. Camping is not permitted in Morwell National Park.

Flora

Some 400 recorded plant species include over 40 different orchids, from the tiny bird orchids of autumn to the large summer flowering Hyacinth Orchid. The rare Butterfly Orchid is also found in the park. The vegetation varies from fern gullies still showing evidence of past logging to dry eucalypt forest. The flowers of *Prostanthera lasianthos* are spectacular around December in the higher reaches of the Fosters Gully Track. Mountain Grey Gum and Messmate are dominant in Fosters

Gully. The steep hillsides of Billys Creek have stands of Mountain Grey Gum, Messmate and Blue Gum, with Manna Gum and Swamp Gum more common along the creek flats. Common acacias throughout the park include Silver Wattle, Blackwood and Varnish Wattle. The park is notable for its diversity of ferns, including Oval and two other fork ferns, Weeping Spleenwort with Filmy-ferns and Bristle-Ferns hanging on the tree fern trunks.

Fauna

Swamp Wallabies and echidnas are frequently seen in Fosters Gully and koalas are common in the tall Mountain Grey Gums. At night the Common and Mountain Brushtail Possums and Ringtail Possums come out and Greater Gliders are common. Nearly 100 species of birds have been recorded in the Park and include Eastern Yellow Robins, Grey Shrike-thrushes and Crimson Rosellas. Superb Lyrebirds can be heard frequently, though seldom seen. Visitors should watch out for Tiger, Black and Copperhead Snakes and there are several lizard species including the Lace Monitor.

History

Morwell National Park was declared in 1967 to preserve the colonies of Butterfly Orchids and Oval Fork-ferns in Fosters Gully. The newer section added in 1987 contains the historic Billys Creek Weir which once supplied water to Morwell.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎ 51722111
Further information on the plants can be found in the book Harris, Ken, *Flowers and Ferns of Morwell National Park*, Friends of Morwell NP, 1997 or on the comprehensive website morwellnp.pangaean.net

23. Wirilda Environment Park (map 97 J4)

Location and access

Access to this 100 ha bushland park is via Clarkes Road which turns north off the Moe-Glengarry Road (C108) on the west side of the Tyers River, approximately 3 km west of Tyers. It is open from 9 am to dusk.

Facilities

A large and attractive picnic area beside the Tyers River has plenty of parking and is located about 600 metres from the entrance off Clarkes Road. Toilets, barbecues, a large shelter and tables are provided here. A short wetland boardwalk links the picnic area with the entrance. There are also longer marked walks in the park. The park is also the southern end of the pleasant day walk to Moondarra Dam.

Flora and Fauna

The red box eucalypt association and riparian vegetation as well as the wetland area attract the 90 bird species recorded for the park. The tall trees and riparian vegetation fronting the Tyers River flowing beside the picnic area create a good birdwatching area. Ollies track, which is accessed behind the pumping station, leads beside the river through Applebox, Manna Gum and Red Box trees. Ferns along the track are mainly the Downy Ground-fern, Rock and Sickle fern. Birds are numerous with honeyeaters, lyrebirds, whipbirds, whistlers, robins, fantails and many understorey bush birds to be seen. The Yellow-tufted Honeyeater can be found here if not already spotted in the picnic area near the weir. The Red Box track turns off and leads up the hill through a drier community of plants. The mistletoe bird has been regularly spotted up this track. Further along Ollies track, Jims track also leads up the hill. These tracks are named after local field naturalists Ollie Thompson and Jim Wall for their long service on the Wirilda committee, The large variety of plants in Wirilda make it special, for instance three types of Lomatia can be found: *Lomatia fraseri and L. myricoides* along the river with *L. ilicifolia* in the drier areas up the hill. The plantings of grevilleas in the boardwalk area make it attractive for honeyeaters.

24. Jean Galbraith Memorial Wildflower Reserve (map 97 J4)

The noted naturalist Jean Galbraith who lived in Tyers for most of her life donated land in 1936 to preserve the flora of the area. This small reserve is located on Mt Hope Road in Tyers opposite the family home featured in her book 'Garden in a Valley'. Because of this she was able to look after it until too frail to continue. After her death it was neglected for a time and became overgrown and infested with weeds. A committee of management is now working to restore the area to represent its original flora, label the plants and maintain access paths. This reserve was the first private wildflower reserve set aside under the auspices of the Native Plant Preservation Society. There are no facilities provided but there is plenty of picnic space in the township of Tyers.

25. Tyers Park (map 97 J3)

Location and access

Tyers Park comprises 1310 ha of forest in the foothills to the north of the Latrobe Valley between Traralgon and Erica. Petersons Lookout above the Tyers River is reached via the W2 track off the Tyers-Walhalla Road to the west. Moondarra Reservoir to the north of the park is signposted from the Moe-Rawson Road.

Facilities

Moondarra Reservoir has an adjoining grassy picnic area with tables among mature native and exotic trees. There are toilets and an old building relocated from the former township of Gould flooded by the reservoir serves as a shelter, use of which must be booked in advance. A short circuit nature walk adjoins the higher reaches of the picnic area. A longer walking track follows the Tyers River from Moondarra Reservoir south to Wirilda Environment Park (requiring at least 5 hours walking). Various tracks, some 4WD only, access points along the walking track, allowing walks on shorter sections.

Geology

Outcrops of limestone and conglomerate are a feature, the limestone containing both plant and animal fossils. Peterson's Lookout is a crag of conglomerate rock which overlooks the Tyers Gorge, providing fine views of the Tyers River and the Latrobe Valley. The site of the old kilns and the old quarry of Tyers Limestones are found down W3 track. The limestone quarry face formed cliffs of from 15 m to 18 m, which were laid down in a horizontal bed and had been tipped into a vertical position by the tremendous earth movements of long past periods. The Siluro-Devonian limestone is fossiliferous and includes many remains of corals, crinoids, brachiopods, trilobites and many others. Fossils are also found in the mudstones below the roadway.

Flora and Fauna

The vegetation is predominantly open forest and woodland, including Yellow and Red Box, Silvertop, Manna Gum, Mountain Grey Gum and Yertchuk. There are seven species of acacias, eight species of pea flowers, daisy-bushes, common heath and many small herbs. Birds include honeyeaters and pardalotes, and you may see a Peregrine Falcon overhead. Echidnas, bandicoots and gliders are common.

Information

Parks Victoria, ☎ 131963

26. Victory Park, Traralgon (map 342 J8)

This city park acquired its name 'Victory Park' after World War II. The area was progressively developed to provide mature shade trees and extensive lawns and gardens which surround a rotunda and sound shell.
It was later enlarged to incorporate Newman Park on the eastern side of Traralgon Creek as part of an attractive green belt through the town with walking tracks. The nearby Bert Thompson Reserve contains pleasant sheltered picnic facilities with electric barbecues and toilets.

Information

Latrobe City ☎ 1300 367 700

27. Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve (map 342 G11)

Location and access

This reserve comprises 29.5 ha of varied bush and grassland situated on the southern edge of Traralgon to the west of Traralgon Creek. It is bounded by Hickox Street, Hyde Park Road and Rose Avenue. Access is from the Princes Highway at the Breed Street traffic lights just west of the CBD. Turn south under the railway line to a large roundabout and exit into Hickox Street. Follow this road to the formal reserve entrance to a carpark which can accommodate about 20 vehicles.

Facilities

A wheel chair accessible footpath around the lake leads visitors through attractive woodlands, grasslands and wetlands. Near where the footpath crosses the dam wall, a side track leads to the entrance to "Kickhorse Canyon", a naturally eroded feature that has been there for over 100 years. A hide provides opportunities to observe birdlife on the lake. A second constructed wetland has been developed in the north-eastern corner of the reserve. Seats and tables are strategically situated, but at this stage there are no toilet facilities.

Flora and Fauna

The reserve is registered with Land For Wildlife and is primarily managed with conservation objectives in mind. Management uses a series of conservation zones based on vegetation classes. The major habitats are grassy woodland, lake verge wetland, Gippsland Plains grassland and gully thickets. Plantings of appropriate species of trees and shrubs have enhanced the natural re-growth since grazing animals were taken out of the reserve some years ago. Major tree species are Yellow Box, Swamp Gum, Narrow-leaf Peppermint, Forest Red Gum, Swamp Paperbark, Black Wattle and Blackwood. A range of lilies and

orchids are seen in the spring and native grasses abound. The wetlands are home to a wide range of sedges. Over eighty species of birds have been sighted in the reserve, with water birds on the lake a feature. Freshwater turtle, echidna, snake and possum sightings are possible.

History

The lake in the centre of the reserve was formed by the Victorian Railways in the latter part of the 19th century to supply steam locomotives until the electrification of the Gippsland line. Pipe-work artifacts from this time still exist. It was the site of the original Traralgon Golf Club and there are some stands of trees reflecting the position of the fairways. The former Hobson's Park hospital used part of it and utilised the lake water to grow vegetables. For long periods parts of the reserve were used for grazing. Over all of this time the reserve has been used by the people of Traralgon as a place to wander and to play. Children have often had a fascination with the deeply eroded canyon situated downstream of the lake.

Information

Contact Latrobe City ☎ 1300 367 700
The Reserve is owned by the Crown and administered by the Latrobe City through a voluntary Committee of Management representing the Friends of the Reserve.
Further background information can be found in the report Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, *Reflections in the Reservoir – Oral History of the Railway Reservoir,* 1996

28. Traralgon South Flora and Fauna Reserve (map 98 B6)

Location and access

This large reserve is accessed by travelling south from Traralgon along Traralgon Creek Road past the turn off to Loy Yang Power Station. Bear left onto Callignee South Road, and continue for about 6 km to a carpark on the right. Several marked walking tracks ranging up to 9 km lead off from here, but there are no other facilities.

Geology

This hilly land is composed mainly of alluvial outwash material. A small inlier of soils developed on Tertiary basalt is located on the western side. Elevations range from below 200 m to nearly 300 m. Localised variation in soil texture is not uncommon. Springs and seepage areas may be found in the lower tracts of drainage lines, the headwaters of Shingle Creek. Therefore there is a considerable variety of vegetation types.

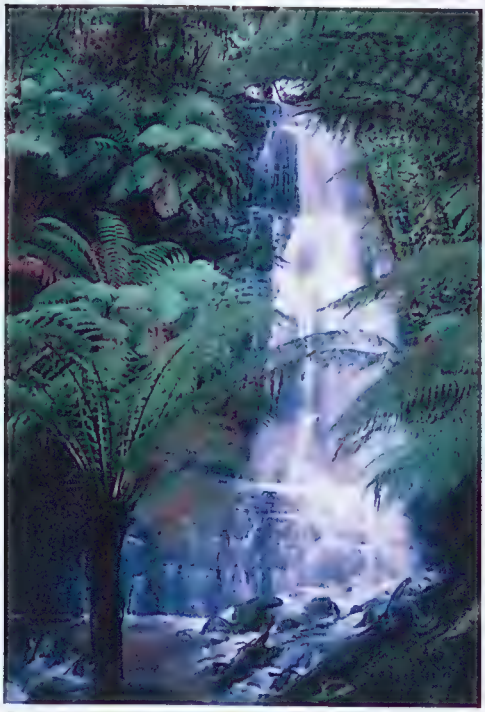
Short-beaked Echidna at Tarra Bulga NP
Craig Campbell

Red-bellied Black Snake
Ken Harris

Purple Diuris *Diuris punctata* at Dawson
Ollie Thompson

Grass Trees in flower at Holey Plains SP
Ollie Thompson

Rare Slender Tree Ferns *Tarra Bulga NP*
Craig Campbell



Cyathea Falls after heavy rainfall *Tarra Bulga NP*
Craig Campbell

Eastern Yellow Robin *Tarra Bulga NP*
Craig Campbell

Petersons Lookout in Tyers SP
Ollie Thompson

Mushroom Rocks in Baw Baw NP
Ollie Thompson

Flora and Fauna

The conservation value of this reserve is high because of the number of eucalypt associations, (that is, the distinctive combinations of eucalypts and understorey species) that are found within a relatively compact area. The dominant eucalypt associations include Messmate - Narrow-leaf Peppermint, Yertchuk – Saw Banksia, Narrow-leaf Peppermint - Manna Gum and Shining Peppermint - Yertchuk. The alluvial sandy soils allow for a heathy understorey with an abundance of wattles, tea-tree, goodenias, mat-rushes, rice-flowers, heaths, candles and pea flowers, creating a springtime delight. Wildflowers are diverse and plentiful in season and birdwatching is rewarding.

History

In October 1987, following representations by the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club, the Land Conservation Council recommended that 833 ha be reserved as a Flora and Fauna Reserve in view of its high conservation value. Its management is under the umbrella of Parks Victoria.

Note: There is a small Flora Reserve at Traralgon South township, just north of the hall and recreation reserve, on the eastern side of Traralgon Creek Road.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎131963

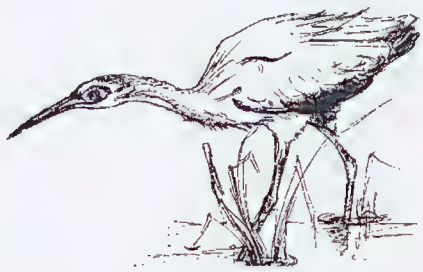
29. Gippsland Plains Rail Trail (map 347 N4)

Location and access

Four sections of this 67 km rail trail between Glengarry and Stratford have been developed for use by walkers and cyclists. They are:

Glengarry to Toongabbie – 9 km
Toongabbie to Cowwarr – 8 km
Heyfield to "The Two Mile Crossing" – 3 km
Maffra to Stratford – 7 km

Each section is accessed from the township in which it starts. Until the surface is upgraded only bikes with wide tyres can be used, and there are some bridges which still need restoration. Features of the rail trail include historic sites and significant vegetation.



Facilities

The rail trail is being managed by a voluntary committee of management, which has produced a brochure describing each section and the facilities available. Public toilets, refreshments and accommodation are available at all towns, although Toongabbie lacks accommodation.

Flora and Fauna

Wetlands are an interesting feature along the trail. These are well developed at Heyfield (see separate entry) and are under development adjacent to the trail at Toongabbie and on the old station site at Cowwarr. Users can travel between the Cowwarr and Heyfield sections along back roads via the Dawson Station site, which is now a flora reserve. This Gippsland Plains Grassy Woodland remnant displays a mass of flowers in Spring, including the endangered orchid species Purple Diuris. Along the Maffra to Stratford section, 23 species of native grasses have been identified. The Friends group is working to progressively revegetate parts of the trail.

Information

Gippsland Plains Rail Trail
Committee of Management
☎ 5148 9233

Rail Trails www.railtrails.org.au

30. Cowwarr Weir (map 98 C1)

This recreation area surrounds an irrigation weir, and provides swimming, picnicking and fishing opportunities. Large trees create shady areas, and these together with the surrounding bushland provide good bird watching. The area is also adjacent to forest drives on the northern side of the weir. Access is signposted off the Traralgon to Heyfield road between Toongabbie and Cowwarr.
Facilities are excellent with toilets, barbecues and picnic tables.

31. Heyfield Wetlands (map 347 P10)

Location and access

The township of Heyfield is located about half an hour's drive north east of Traralgon. The Heyfield Wetlands are found at the southern entrance to Heyfield soon after crossing the Thomson River.

Facilities

The wetlands cover 28 ha and comprise five shallow ponds, a filtration pond and a clear water lake with an island. These features are connected with 3.5 km of walkways and boardwalks, and bird hides are planned for each end of the wetlands. An Information Centre provides displays, books and other items for sale, toilets and shelter for visitors.

Flora and Fauna

A wide range of wetland plants has been established in a remarkably short time, providing a suitable habitat for nesting waterbirds. Over 30 species of birds have been recorded, including Latham's Snipe and Black Swans. Frogs are abundant.

History

The Heyfield Swamp was declared a reserve by the government in 1878. It was used as a local light horse training ground and regular picnic races were held until 1936. Since the 1990s the swampy reserve has been made into a working wetland which collects and naturally filters much of the town run-off. The Heyfield Wetlands Committtee is continuing its development and management.

Information

Wellington Shire ☎ 1300 366 244

32. Jungadale Conservation Reserve (map 98 D7)

Location and access

The Jungadale Conservation Reserve is located at the junction of the Hyland Highway (C482) and the Grand Ridge Road (C484), at Carrajung, south of Gormandale and approximately 25 km from Traralgon. Vehicle access is possible from the Grand Ridge Road, about 200 m from the road junction.

Facilities

The vehicle access track leads to a small carpark and picnic area without toilets. From there, a formed walking track descends steeply into a gully – allow approximately 30 minutes for the 1.9 km circuit. There is also a shorter, gentler Nature Walk.

Flora and Fauna

This 99 ha reserve represents the remnant indigenous vegetation of the Strzelecki Range. It contains a deep gully with tributaries and supports a variety of plant communities, the two main ones being a Messmate community of the slopes and a Mountain Grey Gum community along the streams. The overstorey on the slopes is dominated by Messmate and Gippsland Blue Gum. Shrubs such as Musk Daisy-bush and the Common and Shiny Cassinias frequent the understorey. The lower stream community contains Mountain Grey Gum along with such shrubs as Hop Goodenia and Prickly Currant Bush, and ferns such as Kangaroo Fern and various Blechnum species. Well over one hundred indigenous vascular plants have been recorded. Some forty-two indigenous bird species were recorded by the Trust for Nature Flora and Fauna Survey Group in March 2002. There is a good variety of cockatoos and parrots, honeyeaters, thornbills and treecreepers, together with such species as the Silvereye and the Spotted Pardalote. This indicates a diversity of food sources, shelter and nesting sites in the reserve.
Jungadale is home to koalas of one of the few non-translocated populations remaining in Victoria. Other native mammals recorded include Mountain

and Common Brushtail Possums and the Common Ringtail Possum.

History

The reserve was donated to the community by Australian Paper Plantations in 1998. The block was part of a larger dairy farm from the 1880s, and was burnt in the 1945 fires. A Green Corps Project Grant enabled the construction of walking tracks during the year 2000.

Information

Jungadale is managed by the Carrajung Conservation Reserve Association Inc.
Wellington Shire ☎ 1300 366 244

33. Tarra Bulga National Park (map 98 B8)

Location and access

The Park can be accessed from either Traralgon or Yarram. From the Traralgon direction, follow the Traralgon Creek Road (C483) south to Balook, or from Yarram travel north along the Tarra Valley Road (C484). The Park can also be accessed via the Grand Ridge Road from Carrajung to the east or Mirboo North to the west.

Facilities

A Visitor Information Centre at Balook provides information on the heritage and natural history of the Park and is open on weekends and public holidays. Both Tarra Valley and Bulga Park have toilets and picnic tables, as does the Visitors Centre. Both original picnic areas have attractive historic shelters with a stone fireplace at Tarra Valley. Winter visitors should be prepared for cold and wet conditions.
Accommodation is available in a guest house at Balook and at a caravan park on the Tarra Valley Road. A number of walks radiate from the visitors centre at Balook. One of these enters the Bulga section of the Park which features a suspension bridge over a deep gully of magnificent treeferns. In the lower Tarra Valley section a delightful walk through treeferns leads to Cyathea Falls.

Flora

The park is well known for its giant Mountain Ash trees, beautiful fern gullies and ancient Myrtle Beeches and represents some of the best examples of original cool temperate rainforests of the Strzelecki Ranges. The park is dominated by Mountain Ash with Messmate and Blackwoods on the drier slopes. However, it is most renowned for its fern gullies which contain a large variety of fern species and are dominated by rough tree ferns. Also in the sheltered gullies are ancient Myrtle Beeches, Southern Sassafras, Austral Mulberry and Banyallas. The canopy shelters diverse fungi, mosses and liverworts with over 200 species of fungi identified.

Fauna

The Park is famous for Superb Lyrebirds which may be seen scratching amongst the leaf litter for insects and grubs. They are well known for their skills at mimicking the songs of other birds and visitors are more likely to hear their repertoire of songs echoing through the forest than to see the bird displaying. Common sightings include Eastern Yellow Robin and White-browed Scrubwren. More secretive are Eastern Whipbirds and Pilotbirds which feed on the forest floor. The canopy provides food for Crimson Rosellas, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, Kookaburras and Pied Currawongs. Marsupial mammals including Swamp Wallabies, Common Wombats, Greater and Sugar Gliders, Brush-tailed Possums, Platypus, Bandicoots and native rats have been recorded in the Park. There are also several species of bats and reptiles.

History

Originally most of South Gippsland was one vast forest of Mountain Ash and other eucalypts. The rugged and steeper slopes of the eastern Strzelecki Ranges were opened for selection in the 1890s. Due to the harsh conditions and nature of the land, many farms were later abandoned. The quality of the remnant fern gullies led Alberton Shire Council to reserve small areas of forest near Balook in 1904 and in the Tarra Valley in 1909. The former was named Bulga, an Aboriginal word meaning 'mountain', and the latter was named after Charlie Tarra, an Aboriginal who guided the Polish explorer Strzelecki through Gippsland in 1840. Following recommendation by the Land Conservation Council in November 1982, the two separate parks were joined through a land exchange with APM Forests. The Tarra Bulga National Park now contains 2,015 ha of Wet Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎ 131963

34. Holey Plains State Park (map 98 G5)

Location and access

Holey Plains is an area of 10,800 ha of open forest, mainly Saw Banksia and eucalypts, on a series of sandy ridges. The park is most easily accessed from Rosedale on the Princes Highway, between Traralgon and Sale. Head south from the centre of Rosedale along Willung Road, cross the railway line, turn left onto the Rosedale-Stradbroke Road and then follow the signs.

Facilities

There are picnic areas on the top of Holey Hill and at Harriers Swamp, Merrimans Creek and Clear Water Lake. All provide fireplaces, and all except Merrimans Creek have toilets. Camping is permitted at Holey Hill and Harriers Swamp and walking tracks commence at both sites.

Geology

Holey Hill (218 m), the highest point in the park, is a Miocene Limestone outcrop which has sandy ridges of Pliocene gravels in the west grading into Pleistocene and Miocene sands in the east. The park is underlain by brown coal in the east and peats occur in some sections. The coal has a high sulphur content and is unlikely to be extracted because of associated air quality problems. Soils are nutrient-poor yet support a high diversity of heath plant species, as is common in areas of Australia with nutrient deficient soils.

Flora and Fauna

The area contains an extremely varied flora, with over 530 species being recorded. This includes some very rare and localized species such as the Holey Plains Mintbush *Prostanthera galbraithii,* which is almost restricted to the park. Common eucalypts include stringybarks, peppermints and Apple Box. Grass trees are also a feature, together with at least 25 species of orchids. The park contains a network of narrow winding sandy roads and tracks, a number of which are driveable and from which emus and grey kangaroos are frequently to be seen. Birds are numerous and varied, especially when the banksias are in flower, and 126 species have been recorded.

History

The area was part of a squatting run taken up in the 1840s by the Crooke family, who still own Holey Plains homestead, named for the crab holes along the Latrobe River. The Holey Plains State Park was declared in 1973 after much lobbying by the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club. In the late 1960s the Australian Paper Manufacturers company leased crown land at Rosedale South to clear and plant pine trees, and until the pines were thick enough to smother the wildflowers, there was a real botanic garden in the cleared areas. The club collected details of the plants that grew in the area over a number of years and drew on these records in its submissions to have the area reserved.

Information

Parks Victoria ☎ 131963

35. Mullundung State Forest (map 98 F8)

Location and access

Mullundung State Forest is located to the north of Woodside in South Gippsland. It may be accessed either from the Carrajung-Woodside Road (C453) to its west, or from Darriman on the South Gippsland Highway (A440) to its east. The Flora and Fauna Reserve is 1520 ha in area and there is a 180 ha reference area in the middle.

Facilities

There are no visitor facilities.

Geology

The rocks of the Woodside block of Public Land that includes Mullundung are of Pliocene age – 1.7 to 6 MBP (Million years Before Present). The rocks outcropping are formed principally from Tertiary and Quaternary alluvial sediments, that is, deposited on river flood plains, usually sand and gravels, lacustrine sediments (originating from lake deposition) and aeolian sediments (wind blown sand, often forming dunes).

Flora

The area has been set aside to preserve open forests of Yellow Stringybark and Gippsland Grey Box, and areas of Silver-leaf Stringybark open woodland with a wet heathy understorey. The reserve contains representations of four Yellow Stringybark associations typical of the lowland forests of South Gippsland, much of which has been cleared for agriculture. Particularly important is the occurrence of the endangered sun orchid *Thelymitra matthewsii.* The stand of Coast Grey Box has been noted as having high botanical significance through being at the south western limit of its range in Victoria. In spring the ground can be carpeted with pink and white Caladenias. One Field Naturalist October excursion recorded 13 species of orchid, including six Caladenia species in one area of the forest on Anzac Road.

Fauna

The mature vegetation with its diversity of habitat types, from low heathy woodland to tall open forest, supports a wide range of native fauna. Arboreal mammals are well represented, as are small ground dwellers, including the uncommon Southern Brown and Long-nosed Bandicoots. The Red-necked Wallaby, an uncommon to rare species in this part of Gippsland, is also present. More than 70 species of native birds have been recorded for the area.

History

Mullundung has been logged for over 120 years, especially for fence posts and more recently firewood. At various times in the past it has supported small hardwood sawmills with a tramline to Yarram and large numbers of beam and sleeper cutters. Considerable quantities of charcoal were obtained during World War II, and it was a proclaimed military training area for navigation, infantry drills and tactics.

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Field Naturalist Club of Victoria
Latrobe City Council
South East Australian Naturalists Association Inc
Uralla Nature Reserve Committee

Further Information
Many reserves have Friends groups which may be contacted through the following local or state government authorities.

Department of Sustainability and Environment
71 Hotham Street
Traralgon 3844
5172 2111
www.dse.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria
71 Hotham Street
Traralgon 3844
131 963
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Latrobe City Council
Commercial Road
Morwell 3840
1300 367 700
www.latrobe.vic.gov.au

Baw Baw Shire
Civic Centre
Warragul 3820
5624 2411
www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au

Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club
PO Box 1205
Morwell 3840
http://home.vicnet.net.au/~lvfnc

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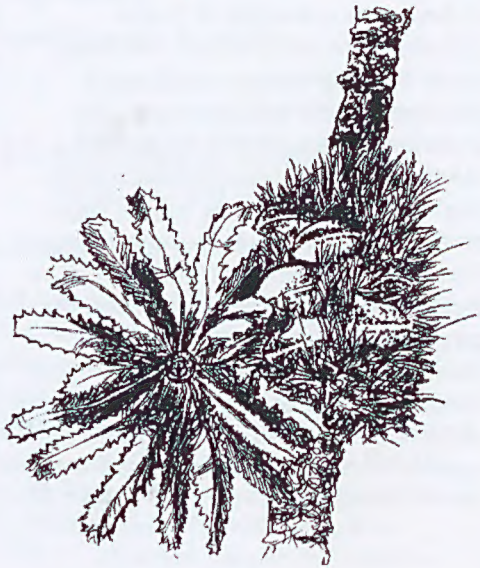

Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club